WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY - Founded December 17, 1857 MAY 1981

WASHTENAW IMPRESSIONS

BRING BOOKS, ANTIQUES TO MAY 28 WCHS MEETING FOR EXPERT APPRAISAL

Ever wonder what Great Aunt Samantha's quilt or that first edition of *Paradise Lost* is worth?

Bring it to the WCHS meeting at 8 p.m. Thursday, May 28, at the Salvation Army Citadel and have it appraised free by experts.

Appraisers will be James Babcock, antique book seller of Algonac, formerly of Birmingham's Stalker and Boos, and Demaris Cash of Treasure Mart in Ann Arbor.

Each person will be asked to tell the audience about their item. Those attending may bring books or any item they can carry through the door.

WCHS ELECTION MAY 28

The annual business meeting with election of officers will be held at 8 p.m. Thursday, May 28, at the Salvation Army in conjunction with the antiques appraisal.

Officers are elected annually. Five directors are to be chosen, one to fill the unexpired term of Ellen St. Amour who resigned. Nominations may be made from the floor.

TO TEACH LOCAL HISTORY

Ypsilanti Public Schools, with an $89,000 two-year grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, are developing units on local history to be tied in with each grade level's social studies. Jerry Fouchey, facilitator, directs the project.

SPRECHEN SIE DEUTSCH?

Most of Washtenaw County's citizens of German descent descended from Schwaben of southwestern Germany.

George Wieland, 820 Granger, Ann Arbor, himself of Schwaben descent, would like to know how much of the language and customs brought from Germany survive here today. He invites calls at 665-9618.

WCHS JUNE 13 BUS TOUR TO VISIT 'FALLEN TIMBERS', RESTORED FORT MEIGS, 1828 COLUMBIAN HOUSE INN

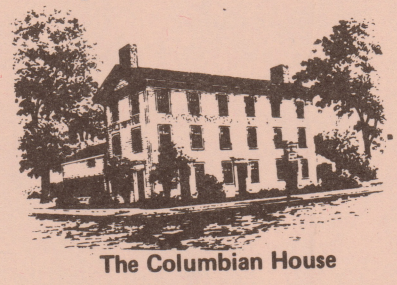
Before Americans could settle Michigan or Washtenaw County or have a Toledo War, they had to battle Indians and British at Fallen Timbers and Fort Meigs near Toledo.

The 1981 WCHS bus tour will visit those battle sites Saturday, June 13, as well as Wolcott House pioneer museum in Maumee, Ohio. Luncheon is planned at the historic 1828 Columbian House restaurant in Waterville where Henry Ford danced and ghosts play.

Tour guide Wystan Stevens will narrate enroute and point out interesting architecture in a swing through Toledo if there is time.

"Mad" Anthony Wayne defeated the Indians at Fallen Timbers in 1794. William Henry Harrison built and held Fort Meigs in 1813 against British seige.

In 1840, Harrison, running for president, returned and spoke at the largest campaign rally ever held in Ohio. Harrison backers called it the "log cabin and hard cider campaign", signifying that their man had simpler tastes than his opponent, Van Buren.



The Columbian House

Wooden stockaded Fort Meigs, restored in 1976, will hold its annual Harrison Rally Days that weekend. Besides exhibits in the blockhouses, costumed groups will reenact War of 1812 activities, a log cabin will be under construction and they'll even press cider.

The tour will be $22 per person. Prepaid reservations due Friday, June 5 to Chairman Patricia Austin. (See reservation card enclosed.)

Tourgoers may park free and board the bus at 9:45 a.m. at Great Lakes Federal Savings parking lot, Washington and Division Streets, Ann Arbor. The bus will return by 7 p.m. For more information call 663-5281 or 663-8826.

ART FAIR HELP NEEDED

Great Lakes Federal Savings is again giving WCHS a chance to earn a tidy sum at the Art Fair July 22--25 selling pop and parking cars.

With donation of proceeds from rental of booths under GLFS portico on Liberty Street last year, WCHS gained $2,445.

Volunteers are needed. Please call Rosalie Collie, chairman, at 769-8530 (office) or 995-3127 (home). A parking chairman is also needed.

OLD ROCKING CHAIR GIVEN

Dr. and Mrs. Alexander Nelson of 2222 Fuller Road have donated a Victorian rocking chair with caned seat and back to WCHS.

DEPOT TO BE RESTORED

The City of Saline now owns the old railroad depot and a Friends of the Depot group has formed to repair and preserve it. Puppeteer Meredith Bixby has leased it for three years for his workshop as soon as it is ready.

The group meets the first and third Thursdays at City Hall. For more information call John Sickler, 429-9624.

SEE YOU IN SEPTEMBER

This is the last issue of *The Impressions* until September.

Special thanks to faithful longtime helpers Anna Thorsch for keylining and Ethelyn Morton, corresponding secretary, for mailing. When Mrs. Morton's arm was broken last fall, Ellen St. Amour kindly mailed them.

OZ AS ALLEGORY

The Wizard Was--Would You Believe--McKinley?

There's more to "Wonderful Wizard of Oz" than a happy fairy tale of a young Kansas girl swept up in a cyclone and away to that marvelous, magical land of Oz, according to Gerald Linderman, U-M professor of history.

Superficially the story, published in 1900, seems just right for the close of the "gay 90's", he observed at the April WCHS meeting, but went on to show that the 90's really weren't so gay.

"Dorothy encounters in Oz the scarecrow who thinks he is without brains, the tin woodman who thinks he is without heart and the cowardly lion who fears he lacks courage.

"They band together to overcome a variety of vicissitudes, finally make their way to the city of the all-powerful wizard. In the end he is exposed as a charlatan, an incredible wire puller, a man who is in fact almost all humbug.

"The moral of course is that each of Dorothy's friends is impelled to look within himself and discover that which he fears he lacks. And then Dorothy and Toto, her dog, rejoicing, are returned to that rather dreadful Kansas farm, perhaps charming, but somehow inadequate reward for all her difficulties.

"The image of the 'gay 90's' is still very much with us. I've noticed recent shopping malls in Chicago and Washington which use the 'gay 90's' motif. A few years ago the Chicago Whitesox baseball team took on absolutely dreadful uniforms to emulate the gay 90's. Farrell's Ice Cream Parlor at Briarwood incorporates 90's motifs. Recently on radio I heard 1890's songs — "Bicycle Built for Two", "Give My Regards to Broadway", "Sweet Rosie O'Grady" — all songs of pleasantness.

"History has an infinite assortment of tricks. I think the 'gay 90's' is one of history's best tricks. No one, I would wager, who lived through the 90's would have thought to call it gay. If research done for me at the graduate library is accurate, that phrase doesn't even appear until 1937.

"It is a time of rather stunning crises. Between 1890-97 there is a severe economic depression. Industrial violence touches new levels — the Homestead strike in Pennsylvania, the Pullman strike in Chicago. There is in 1896 what must have been a trauma-filled presidential election.

"There are other less palpable crises — the frontier is no more and there is the agrarian revolt.

"It is led by small-scale dirt farmers of the great plains and tenant farmers of the southern hills, called generally members of the people's party — populists.

"With the arrival of the railroad, farmers are drawn into the world market. Prices were then set by some ineluctable combination of circumstances beyond their control.

"Another grievance is the buffeting by Mother Nature. In the late 1870's and early 1880's, a kind of boom fever sends people on another phase of westward expansion into quite marginal lands. They invest everything, then the climatic pattern changes in the mid-1880's. It, in fact, returns to normal, although they never see it that way. Summers become very parched, winters, very severe.

"Theodore Roosevelt, no Populist, went west in lamentation of the death of his first wife and invested in a great cattle herd. The entire herd was destroyed in great plains blizzards of 1887-88. There were also locusts and other pests. These were all acts of God, to be sure, but had the effect of intensifying the emotional pitch under which the farmers lived.

"For most people today, the weather is a matter of only marginal consequences in our lives. I think to that degree that we are indeed separated from the experience of farmers today and even more from great plains farmers of the 1890's.

"During this period farmers also begin to feel the shift from a society of small towns and farms to a society of large cities. Farmers are becoming a minority. City people are no longer talking about farmers as the backbone of society, but as 'hick', 'hayseed', 'rube', and that hurts.

"These problems of control, economics, natural devastation and status become the substance of this agricultural revolt. A broad-gauge Populist political program evolved.

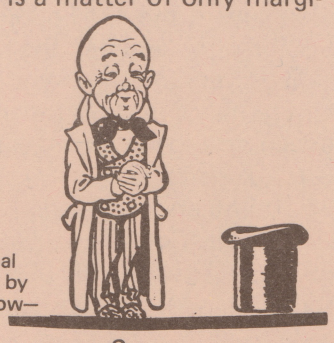
"First of many changes is direct election of United States senators. It moves on to nationalization of banks. In order to win support of city workers, populists support the eight-hour day and even a restriction on the number of immigrants.

"By 1890, in ways that I don't fully understand, the vast majority of those farmers had come to focus on a single issue — currency. Populists decided the gold standard had this nation in a stranglehold. They wanted inflation so they would be able to repay their debts in cheaper dollars. They wanted the unlimited coinage of silver. It's a very complicated, dry issue, totally unsuitable for the kind of quasi-religious crusade that the Populists launch. Populist strength grows very quickly.

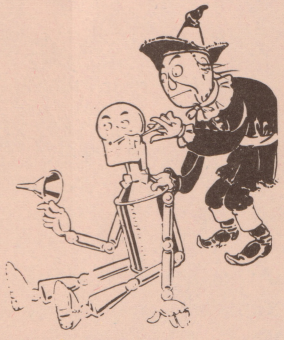
"After the financial panic of 1893, Grover Cleveland discovers that gold is draining from the U.S. treasury. He cannot plug the drain until he begins negotiations with, of all people, Pierpont Morgan.

"Morgan organizes the sale abroad of U. S. government bonds and insures through his English connections that those who buy them will not immediately redeem them for American gold, perpetuating the drain.

"In the eyes of the farmers, that's it — evidence of a Wall Street-Washington conspiracy to squeeze



From original illustrations by W.W. Denslow—



private profit from the distress of this country, particularly farmers. Populists begin to elect large numbers of southern and western governors and legislators.

"Alarmed regular Democratic party politicians break with the administration, seize party machinery and in 1896 nominate William Jennings Bryan for the presidency.

"The Republicans nominate William McKinley of Canton, Ohio. What follows is the most emotional of any American presidential campaign. People in the cities, particularly wealthy people, think the election reduces itself to a matter of civilization versus anarchy.

"In New York City a lady proposes that all the Populists should be tried for treason. The New York Times, not yet the voice of official moderation, hires an alienist (psychiatrist) who concludes that Bryan is a madman.

"There is anxiety, fear, suspicion. What exactly is at stake? Bryan seems to say it is a possible renunciation of that new urban, industrial America and a return to that older America of the farm and small town."

Bryan said at the 1896 convention, "You come to tell us that the great cities are in favor of the gold standard. We reply that the cities rest upon our broad and fertile plains. Burn down your cities, but leave our farms, and your cities will spring up again as if by magic. But destroy our farms and grass will grow in the streets of every city of America.

"You shall not press down upon the brow of labor this crown of thorns. You shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold." Bryan raised his arms as if he were the crucified Christ.

Linderman continued, "Republicans are becoming more and more afraid. Businessmen open their purses to Mark Hanna, Mckinley's campaign manager. They post gold standard arguments in their factories. They put campaign literature in pay packets of their workers.

"An old line of melodrama seems to fit the situation, 'Men vote as you please, but if Bryan is elected the whistle will not blow on Wednesday morning'.

"McKinley, of course, wins by a margin of five percent and Mark Hanna immediately sends him a telegram in which he says, 'God is in his heaven'. Bryan thinks he has been cheated out of his victory by fraud and intimidation.

"The smile of McKinley is like the smile of Dwight Eisenhower — immensely reassuring. The economic distress very quickly yields to the return of economic prosperity. There is an inflation, not of silver, but of gold — new gold strikes in the Klondike and South Africa, and a new technology which extracts more gold from less ore.

"The psychic distress is much more difficult for historians to handle. In only 18 months, the U.S. is fighting the Spanish-American War of 1898. One of the great functions played by that war was to unify American society.

"So the 1890's were not gay but the 'Wizard of Oz' does in another way fit this far different 1890's.

"The author, L. Frank Baum was born in a hamlet in New York state near Syracuse in 1856 into wealthy circumstances. Frank tried a number of pursuits, all underwritten by the family wealth—newspaper work, poultry raising, acting, theater managing, sales. All is well until the mid-1880's.

"Then a series of misfortunes occur. An uncle important to the family business takes ill. A bookkeeper is caught in peculation and fired. The family loses its chain of theaters which Frank managed. His father becomes ill and dies in the late 1880's. His wife is stricken with peritonitis and in bed for a couple of years.

"Baum and his family then go west to the Dakotas, Populist country. They settle at Aberdeen. Depression strikes and Baum's general store fails. He buys a weekly newspaper but the sheriff locks it because of debt. He moves to Chicago, where he works as a newspaper reporter, department store buyer and finally a traveling salesman.

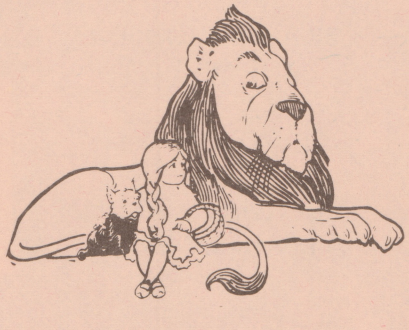
"In 1896 he was moved by Bryan's 'cross of gold' speech and marched in torchlight parades for Bryan in 1896 and 1900. Given these Populist-like tribulations and his support of Bryan, is it not reasonable to think that one might find some of these feelings reflected in his writing? Several historians have begun to look at 'The Wizard of Oz' as Democratic-Populist political allegory.

"The Kansas farm is meant to be exactly that. The cyclone is a Bryan victory. Dorothy is set down in such a way that she kills the Wicked Witch of the East, freeing the munchkins (common people) from the bondage of the east (the money trust).

"To reach the Emerald City, Dorothy must traverse the yellow brick road (the gold standard) but she can do so only with those silver slippers. There must be parity between gold and silver.

"The scarecrow is the farmer who thinks he is just a hayseed although he is actually responsible and imaginative. The woodman is the oppressed industrial worker whom industry is trying to make too mechanical.

"The cowardly lion becomes Bryan himself. He is frightening people but not hurting them. The Emerald City is Washington,D.C. McKinley is the Wizard, pulling strings but not really in control. The Bryanites must realize that it is within them to seize control of their destinies.



"The friends destroy the Wicked Witch of the West with water — that water of which the drouth has deprived the plains for so many years. The witch of the west is the land barons and mortgage holders. Finally those silver slippers carry Dorothy home to Kansas.

"So I doubt there is any congeniality between the 'Wizard of Oz' as fairy tale and the 'gay 90's' but is there not a kind of covert congeniality between the story in this allegorical reading and the much more realistic decade of the 1890's as I have tried to set it out?"

GSWC PLANS TWO EVENTS

Genealogy Society of Washtenaw County — picnic, Sunday, June 28, home of Bob Anderson, 8173 Earhart Road, South Lyon.

July 19, 1 p.m. — read St. Thomas Lutheran Church cemetery, Ellsworth and Haab Roads, Freedom township. For more information call Polly Bender, 668-6925.

CECIL WARNER ELECTED

Cecil Warner was elected president of the new Northfield township Historical Society. Wes Boughner is vice-president. Nancy Liddell is secretary and temporary treasurer.

PICTURE OF SCHOOL LOST

Dorothy Mummery lost a four-page folder about the size of a post card that she took to photo night in February. Dated 1900 or 1901, it had a picture of the old Ann Arbor High which burned. If found, please call her at 971-5726.

FESTIVAL SEPTEMBER 27

Cobblestone Farm's fall festival will be held Sunday, September 27 at the farm, 2781 Packard Road.

HISTORICAL HAPPENINGS

Chelsea Historical Society — Last meeting for summer 7:30 p.m. Monday, June 8, McKune Library. Plan booths at sidewalk days, fair in August. Architectural survey underway.

Dexter Historical Society — Iver Schmidt's Toby mugs on display at museum. Summer hours begin Tuesday, May 26---1--3 p.m. each Tuesday, second and fourth Saturdays.

Museum open after Memorial Day parade and for Dexter Days, 10--4 p.m. August 8--9. Potluck picnic, election of officers, 1 p.m. Sunday, July 26 at museum.

Manchester Historical Society — No summer meetings scheduled.

Milan Historical Society — Meets 7:30 p.m. third Wednesday of month through summer at Hack House, 775 County Street. Exhibit booth at Milan Community Fair July 7---11.

Northfield Historical Society — Potluck picnic, 3---6 p.m. Sunday, June 28, at Wes Boughner home, 5145 Pontiac Trail, originally home of pioneer George Sutton.

Salem Historical Society — Meet 7 p.m. third Thursday at old South Salem Stone School, Curtis and North Territorial Roads June, July, August. The society is restoring the school. A donated old wood cookstove and privy now add nostalgic touches.

Saline Historical Society — Walking tour of Saline, potluck picnic at a local park with election of officers, Sunday, June 21. More information from Alice Byrne, 429-7661. Two vans will take members on tour who do not feel like walking.

Webster Historical Society — Meets 7:45 p.m. first Monday through summer at Webster Community House. Dorothea Fraver will show slides June 1 from township architectural survey. July 6--Mrs. Mae Mast's 30 year collection of slides of the township will be shown.

Three study groups are focusing on setting up historic districts, scenic roads and preserving farmland and natural areas.

Ypsilanti Historical Society — Museum, 220 North Huron Street, open 3--5 p.m. Friday--Sunday. Exhibit on early schools until last week of May, then Ernest Griffen's insulators for next month.

Second annual antique show and sale 10--6 p.m. August 29,30, at old high school gym (Community Education Building), 210 West Cross Street, during Heritage Festival which begins the 28th.

SALEM ELECTS MRS. LYKE

Mrs. Ronald (Irene) Lyke is president of the Salem Historical Society. Gayle Grahl is vice-president; Irene Dunn, secretary; and Annie Wessel, treasurer.

HOUSE TOUR SEPTEMBER 20

The Old West Side house tour, featuring several homes, will be held 1--6 p.m. Sunday, September 20. For more information call Malcolm (Mac) Collins, 665-8037.

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Editor: Alice Ziegler, 663-8826
Keylining: Anna Thorsch
Mailing: Ethelyn Morton, 662-2634

WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEETING

8:00 p.m. THURSDAY MAY 28, 1981

SALVATION ARMY

West Huron at Arbana Ann Arbor, Michigan

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 96
Ann Arbor, Mich.

Ypsilanti Historical Soc.
220 N. Huron Street
Ypsilanti, Mi 48197

WCHS 1981 OHIO TOUR

Saturday, June 13

Please make reservations for _____persons at $22 each.

Total enclosed: $_____. Reservations due Friday, June 5.

Make check or money order out to: Washtenaw County Historical Society, 1931 Coronada Drive, Ann Arbor, MI 48103.

NAME_____

ADDRESS_____

City, State, Zip_____

Please list name or names as you wish them to appear on name tags here or on back:

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